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Third Edition.

BAPTISM FORESHADOWED  
BY  
NOAH'S SALVATION IN THE ARK.

1 Pet. iii, 19—21.

*By Mr. R. Govett.*

“He (Jesus) went and preached to the spirits in prison, which sometime (once) were disobedient, when once the long-suffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few,\* that is, eight souls were saved by water. The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us, (not the putting away the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience towards God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ.”

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IN order rightly to enter into the design of this passage, it will be necessary first to set right a mistaken rendering of one of the little words in it, which has effectually obscured its meaning. It should be, not “*by* water,” but “*through* water.” And this may be made clear even to an English reader. The Greek preposition in question generally signifies “*through*,” and points out either the *means* by which a thing is done, or the *difficulties* which prevent its accomplishment. So does the word “*through*” in English. We may say of a general—‘He escaped *through* the fleetness of his horse,’ which points out the *means* of his escape ; or we may say—‘He charged, and escaped *through* the ranks of the enemy ;’ where the preposition marks not the means of his escape, but the *difficulties* which he was obliged to surmount in order to effect it. An example of this meaning of the preposition occurs, where the people of Nazareth sought to kill Jesus ; “But he passing *through* the midst of them went his way :” Luke iv, 30. Also John viii, 59 ; Luke v, 19 ; Acts xiv, 22.

\* More literally “*Into* which, few, that is, eight souls *escaped through* water, antitypically whereto baptism doth now save us also.”

So it is in the case before us. The waters are set forth to us, not as the *means* of Noah's escape, but as the *difficulty* which he must pass through, in order to salvation. The waters were not friendly, but destructive. He escaped in *spite of them*; not in consequence of them.\* The *ark* was the *means of escape*, the defence against the angry billows. The waters were the patriarch's dread; the ark his refuge. "Noah went in, and his sons, . . . . *into the ark, because of the waters of the flood:*" Gen. vii, 7,

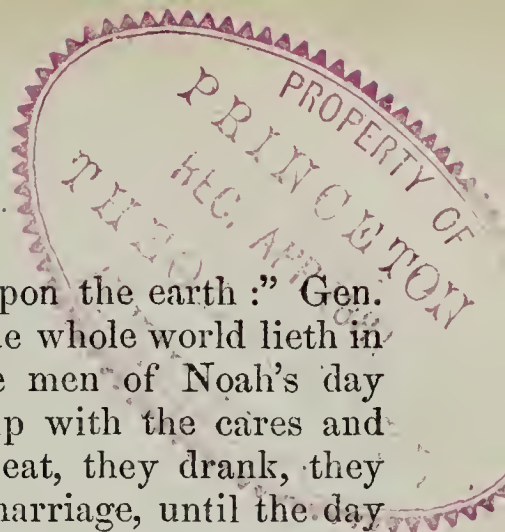
This error being rectified, let us now inquire into the text. It has then affirmed, that the salvation of Noah and his house in the ark was intended to foreshadow the salvation of the believer of the present day by baptism.

The resemblances between our day and that of Noah may be classed under five heads: 1. The position of God. 2. Of the world. 3. The church. 4. The ark. 5. The waters.

1. The Most High had looked upon the world and condemned it. A sentence of destruction had gone forth from him against it. "I will destroy man whom I have created from off the face of the earth:" Gen. vi, 7. Yet was a space of mercy granted, during which, as now, the longsuffering of God waited. "His days shall be an hundred and twenty years." And during that time a refuge was making ready. "The ark was preparing." So is it now. The world is condemned, yet God spares, and in the meanwhile sends his messengers to preach the refuge provided. Thus during his day Noah also was "a preacher of righteousness;" and his cry was then, as now, "Flee from the wrath to come."

2. The world also holds the same position as of old. "God looked upon the earth, and behold it was corrupt:

\* Another difficult passage is much enlightened by the same slight change of rendering—"If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss; but he himself shall be saved, yet so as *by* fire:" 1 Cor. iii, 15. It should be "so as through fire;" and the comparison is to a person escaping *through* a house on fire, who loses his goods, though he retains his life. Every one must see that fire is not the means of his escape, but the hindrance to it. In like manner, Isa. xliii, 2; Zech. xiii, 9.



for all flesh had corrupted its way upon the earth :” Gen. vi, 12. Even thus it is now. “The whole world lieth in wickedness :” 1 John v, 19. The men of Noah’s day were engrossed and wholly taken up with the cares and pleasures of this life. “They did eat, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark.” They were warned, but they believed not. And the result of that dispensation will be like the issue of the present. “*Few*, that is eight souls, were saved.” “Many are called, but *few* chosen.” “Strait is the gate and narrow is the way which leadeth unto life, and *few there be that find it* :” Matt. vii, 14.

3. The position of the church is the same. It is in the midst of the ungodly, vexed by their evil. But God’s eye is on it in mercy and acceptance. To it belongs the provided refuge. But it is called, in consequence of its position, to surrender things present. Its salvation in the days of Noah was through *faith*. And even thus are the people of God saved now. “By faith Noah, being warned of God, prepared an ark to the saving of his house, by which he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness that is by faith :” Heb. xi, 7. “By grace are ye saved through faith.” The head of the church in that day answers to, and is a type of, the Head of the church now. His name was Noah, which signifies, “Rest.” And the Lord Jesus is our “*rest*,” as it is written, “Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy-laden and I will *give you rest*.” Noah was the only one seen by God to be righteous : “Thee have I seen *righteous* before me in this generation.” Answerably to which *our* Noah is the “Just one,” “Jesus Christ *the righteous*.”

4. To Noah was the charge given to build God’s instrument of salvation—the Ark. So to the Lord Jesus was assigned the working out a righteousness for man.\* And

\* It is worthy of observation, that the ark was to be “pitched within and without with pitch.” **ונכפרת . . . . . בכפר** But this word signifies also “atonement :” Ex. xxx, 10, &c. Thus then, spiritually taken, the atonement of Christ is the completion of his active righteousness.



at this ark he was incessantly employed. He “fulfilled all righteousness.” “My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to *finish his work*.” “I must work the works of him that sent me while it is day ; the night cometh wherein no man can work :” John iv, 34 ; ix, 4. Day by day he added some new beam, some massive rib to his august work ; and towards the closing scene he surveys it with complacency, and appeals to his Father. “*I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do.*” And as he drove the last nail into the completed ark, he said, “*It is finished*, and he bowed his head and gave up the ghost :” John xix, 30. It is through the righteousness of Jesus that the sinner is saved. This is the only refuge from the wrath of God. And thus the Spirit by Paul puts it. “The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men.” Therefore is righteousness needed. And because of the righteousness provided of God, Paul declares that he was not ashamed of the Gospel, “for it is the power of God *unto salvation*, for therein is the *righteousness of God* revealed . . . . unto faith :” Rom. i, 16—18. And this is just the position which the ark holds. It was prepared by the command of God “to the *saving*” of Noah’s house. And as “grace reigns *through righteousness* unto eternal life,” so *through the ark* was Noah’s household preserved unto a new life and to the blessing wherewith the cleansed world began.

5. The fifth head of resemblance is found in the waters. And by considering what they were in Noah’s day, we shall obtain their present signification in baptism. The waters then were the element of *judgment and destruction*. “Behold I, even I, do bring a *flood of waters* upon the earth, *to destroy all flesh*, wherein is the breath of life from under heaven ; and all that is in the earth shall die :” Gen. vi, 17. “*The waters* shall no more become a *flood to destroy all flesh* :” ix, 15. “*The flood came and destroyed them all* :” Luke xvii, 27. “The world that then was, *being overflowed with water, perished* :” 2 Peter iii, 6. The waters then in baptism represent DEATH. And this exhibits the difference of man’s way of escape,

and God's. When the flood came, man's way of escape lay in striving with all his energies to escape *from them*. But the effort was weak and ineffectual. Of all those that fled from the waters, not one survived. They were overtaken thereby and perished. But God's way of escape lay *through the water*. He did not set Noah on the pinnacle of some giant-mountain, and there feed him while the floods raged and roared at his feet. No. His way of salvation lay in bringing him quite through them. And this makes Noah's salvation so beautiful a type of salvation now. God's way of salvation is the bringing the believer *through the waters of death unto resurrection-life*. He does not spare his children from death—does not set them high beyond its reach, but brings them through it, while the ungodly are retained by death in its most appalling form—the second death; even as the ungodly of Noah's day were buried beneath the waters.'

And thus the waters may be regarded as the barrier between the two worlds. *Before them* lay the *Adam world*, the abode of sin and corruption, of violence and death—the kingdom of the thorn and the thistle, of labour, and pain, and sorrow, and the curse. *Beyond them* lies the *Noah world* of sacrifice and acceptance, of righteousness and rest, of the covenant with the beast of the field and with man—the world of blessing and of the covenant, of the rainbow and the resurrection. Between these rolls the flood. He that would leave the Adam world of judgment, and escape to the Noah world of blessing, must pass through the intervening waters. And there is no passage from the one to the other save in the ark. He that would have part in the new world of blessing must thus die to the old world of the curse. His passage through the waters of baptism is provided of God, that he may be seen to die to the old world, and to the flesh, its inhabitant.

The world and its children are madly looking for the establishment of things as they are. On this side of time lie the good things of the worldly. They build their hopes where judgment frowns, and where death cuts off life at

seventy years, and where the coming of Christ in vengeance is perpetually threatening. Their hopes are in earth where sin dwells, and where the sentence of labour, and sorrow, and death is continually carried into execution. But the believer, warned of God, flings up this hope of happiness. He says in effect, "I see that there is nothing satisfactory to be looked for here. Judgment is coming. Vengeance like the flood is at hand. I cannot tarry in a sentenced world. My hope is in the resurrection. My confidence is rested on this, that Christ hath died and risen, and will in like manner raise his saints to life eternal. In God's appointed way therefore I will testify this."

He goes down willingly therefore into the waters of baptism. They are still in God's view, and therefore in his also, the element of death. They represent that raging, that unsparing flood, that swept a world to destruction. They are the waters of death still. And it were madness to go down into death except it were commanded. But now that Christ has commanded, it is *faith* to do so. The believer trusts in God's provided ark.

Noah was required, as the believer now, to die to the old world. Whatever possessions he might have had there, he must give up, when he believed the tidings of the destroying flood. He must have surrendered in faith all that he looked on with pleasure and affection, save those that were with him in the ark. He saw the world wicked and corrupt. He saw it lying under the threats and wrath of God. He knew that all hope of happiness under the wrath of God was vain. His entering the ark then was his dying to the old world. And he trusted in God to provide him a new and a better world. In order to this he passed through the destroying waters of the flood. And God failed him not, but brought him forth into a cleansed earth, and gave him a promise and covenant that the waters should never more become a flood to destroy all flesh.

So it is now with the believer. He believes the world and the flesh to be evil in God's sight. He sees judgment



ready to descend upon both. He will escape wrath therefore in God's own appointed way.\* Through death he trusts to pass to endless resurrection-life. This therefore he testifies in the way of Christ's appointment. He suffers an emblematic death and burial beneath the flood. He, like Noah, "escapes through water." He is saved by an emblematic resurrection. And the lesson is set forth that *there is no hope of happiness in anything short of a death with Christ and resurrection with him.*

With the unbeliever it is not so. He sees not God ; he cares not for God's judgment concerning things present. Earthly employments and enjoyments engross him wholly. The preaching of wrath to come he disbelieves and disregards. Therefore for such unbelievers there remains only the flood, when the time of the long-suffering of the Most High is past. Their hopes are wholly here. Their happiness withers under the blighting influence of the curse. And to them death is the destruction, at once of their portion and of their hope. So in the flood the unbeliever and his wealth were swept away together. The waters then are a test of the unbeliever and of the faithful. Noah underwent them voluntarily, and was saved through them. The faithless were unwillingly overtaken by them and perished in them. Noah believed and was prepared. They were unbelieving, and surprised by judgment unto death.

So then we may say to ourselves, when we see any believer coming up out of the waters of baptism,—‘There is one of the escaped in the ark ; there is one of those saved through water ; he has believed in the coming wrath, and has escaped through it by virtue of the prepared ark.’ But how do you know that he has been in the ark ? Because he has come up safely from the waters. All perished in the flood that were not in the appointed refuge. “Noah only remained alive, and the souls that were with

\* Thus does John the Baptist set forth the matter to those who came to his baptism. He regarded it as a token of faith in the coming kingdom and the coming wrath—as the result of the warning to flee from the wrath to come.

him in the ark." He then has died with Christ and is risen with him. The ark has borne for him the violence of the waters of death, and has brought him triumphantly through. He is saved.

But where is the ark? for we can see nothing answering to it. True: the salvation of Noah was temporal and earthly, and an earthly ark visible to the senses was provided. But our salvation is spiritual and eternal, and the ark is therefore spiritual. The law was the letter, the Gospel is the spirit. The law brought the earthly people to the "mountain *that might be touched*"—the visible, tangible mountain of Sinai. But the Gospel brings us to the Mount Zion, and the "*heavenly Jerusalem*," invisible, save to the eye of faith.

Our ark is the perfect righteousness of the Righteous One. And as Noah's righteousness was imputed to his house unto life, so is the righteousness of the Lord Jesus "unto all and upon all them that believe." And as the ark, as soon as it was completed, was shaken by the battering waters of the flood, so as soon as the Lord Jesus had proclaimed his righteousness finished, it was tried by death. And as the ark went upon the face of the waters and was lift up above them, so Jesus, though he was proved by death, "could not be holden of it." All other vessels were wrecked in that tremendous tide; but the vessel of God could not be sunk.

The escape of the ark was their escape who were within it. So the resurrection of Jesus, and his triumph over death, is the triumph of all who are in him. The ark was the covering, both from the waters descending from above, and from those bursting up from below. So is the righteousness of Christ our stay and defence—our answer to every challenge, whether from above or from beneath. As soon as the ark is escaped, a promise is given from the Most High that no such flood shall ever again invade the earth. So to those that are risen in Christ Jesus no wrath can ever come, nor death draw nigh. "Neither can they die any more, but are equal unto the angels, and are the children of God, being the children of the resurrection."



We have seen then, in several points, how baptism answers to the flood. The apostle adds further, that "baptism doth also now save us." But lest this should mislead any to think that the receiving the rite or ceremony alone was what he intended, he carefully distinguished between what is *not*, and what *is*, the true and essential point of real baptism, which is inseparably connected with salvation.

Baptism is *not* "the putting away the filth of the flesh." It is no visible, and earthly, and external effect which the water would naturally produce. It is not intended to set forth that which water can effect for the flesh—its *cleansing*. And herein the *Gospel* takes a very different position from the *Law*. *Both* use water after a manner appointed of God. But the meaning in the respective cases is very different. Under the law water was used for *the cleansing of the flesh*. "Every soul that eateth that which died of itself . . . shall both wash his clothes and *bathe himself in water*, and be unclean until the even; *then shall he be clean*:" Lev. xvii, 15. "*He that is to be cleansed* shall wash his clothes, and shave off all his hair, and *wash (bathe) himself in water, that he may be clean*:" Lev. xiv, 8.

This was ordained because the law assumed that man might keep the commandments of God, and that the flesh could be clean. But now the Gospel has come, and it takes for granted what has been abundantly proved, that man is so fallen, as to be utterly unable to render the exact obedience which the law of God requires. It assumes the flesh to be radically and incurably unclean. It therefore ordains, not an *occasional cleansing* of it, as though it were subject only to *occasional defilement*, but a *burial of it once for all*, as *utterly corrupt and dead*. This is exhibited in baptism, which the Scriptures declare to be a burial: Rom. vi, 4; Col. ii, 12. The eye of sense could see the meaning of baptism under the law. The eye of faith alone can see it now.

But having learned what baptism is not, the Apostle goes on to teach what it is. It is "the answer of a good conscience towards God." Baptism then, considered in

its essential part, is a transaction with the conscience. The law cleansed the flesh, but the conscience is left under defilement, unsatisfied, and guilty. Its “gifts and sacrifices could not make them that did the service *perfect as pertaining to the conscience*, which stood only in meats and drinks, and divers *washings* :” Heb. ix, 9, 10. “The law . . . can never with those sacrifices . . . make the comers thereunto perfect. For then would they not have ceased to be offered? because that the worshippers once purged, would have had *no more conscience of sins*. But in those sacrifices there is a *remembrance again made of sins* every year :” Heb. x, 1, 2. With the gospel it is the reverse. It *buries the flesh as dead and corrupt* : its design being, “that the body of sin might be destroyed,” Rom. vi, 5, while it makes *the conscience clean*. “For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the *purifying of the flesh*, how much more shall the blood of Christ . . . . . *purge your conscience*?” Heb. ix, 13, 14.

The believer, in coming to baptism, has a good conscience. He is justified by the blood of Christ. He is, by faith, united to him—one with him. As Christ has died unto sin, so has he. As Christ has risen to life, so has he, in Christ. As Christ has kept the law, so has he, that is by faith, one with him. His sins then are put away, by the sacrifice of Christ. His conscience is clear and clean of stain, as though he had never sinned. He can come with boldness. The sprinkled blood has purged him from an evil conscience. He comes to baptism, to present himself as buried with Christ, in token that he is dead with Christ : for who are buried but the dead? His answer, therefore, is the answer of a good conscience. Do you inquire of him, why he, a sinner, a sinner confessed, stands so boldly? His reply is—‘I have in Christ suffered death, the penalty of sin. “I have been crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live.” I have died unto sin, I am living by a new life, not subject to the law of sin and death. I am in the ark of God, and the ark has borne the waters’ heaviest surges, and is come off a conqueror.’ Thus, by

the resurrection of Christ, has he the answer of a good conscience.

The expression, "The answer," doubtless refers to the usual manner of performing the rite. Of those baptized, a profession of faith is required in Jesus as the Redeemer. This indeed, the hypocrite can give before man as well as the true Christian. But the real answer depends on the state of the conscience. If the heart feels what the tongue utters of faith in Jesus, then is the baptism good, and this part is its essence. Such baptism saves. It is the belief of the heart conjoined with confession of the lip. This is salvation. "The word of faith which we preach is, that if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God has raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with *the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation*:" Rom. x, 8, 10.

But let us next observe what light this view of baptism throws upon the questions—*Who are to be baptized?* and —*What is the manner of baptism?*

I. (1) With regard to the fit *subjects* of baptism, it shows that *it cannot be rightly administered to infants*. For they cannot give "*the answer of a good conscience*." First, they have not as yet either *conscience* or intellect: as it is written—"Before the child shall know to refuse evil, and to choose the good:" &c. Isa. vii, 16. Secondly, they have not a *good* conscience; for this comes by faith in Christ; and faith is impossible without knowledge: as it is written—"How shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard!" Rom. x, 14. And lastly, "*the answer of a good conscience*" they cannot have; for that supposes years of discretion and the use of articulate speech. (2) Infant baptism also destroys the established and necessary order of God's salvation, as presented in the type before us. God's method of escape is, first—"Believe;" then—"Be baptized." First *enter the ark*—then *pass through the flood*. But the baptism of unbelieving infants supposes that YOU MAY FIRST ESCAPE THROUGH THE WATERS, AND AFTERWARDS ENTER THE ARK. This is its sad error with



regard to the *refuge* provided. For if there be escape except in the ark, then Christ is dead in vain.

Next it is equally faulty with regard to the *place of abode*. Infant baptism supposes the child *to have passed through the flood into the new world of blessing, while its life, as it grows up, most convincingly attests it to be living in the old world of disobedience and the curse.*

And the doctrine of baptismal regeneration makes more fearful havoc still with the type, and supposes *that the waters of death and judgment impart new life: and that the flood puts the unbeliever into the ark!* But when once we return to the simple law of Christ to baptize such only as believe, all the difficulties with which the traditions of men have encompassed the truth, vanish like a cloud.

II. With regard to the *manner* of baptism. (1) The inspired comparison shows it to be *total immersion*. The world and its inhabitants were totally immersed and plunged beneath the waters. This the sacred historian carefully informs us—“*All the high hills that were under the whole heaven were covered. Fifteen cubits upwards did the waters prevail; and the mountains were covered. And all flesh died that moved upon the earth, both of fowl, and of cattle, and of beast, and of every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth, and every man:*” Gen. vii, 19, 21. Nothing less, therefore, than total immersion, can represent the flood in its mighty billows overwhelming the world, and the children of unbelief. (2) The water of baptism represents the believer descending into death: and nothing but total immersion can represent the complete extinguishing of life.

(3) Neither sprinkling nor pouring, scripturally, convey the *idea* of the terrible and destroying waters of the deluge. *Sprinkling*, in Holy Writ, is in order to cleanse. “*Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean:*” Ezek. xxxvi, 25.\* But baptism is to represent *death and*

\* This text is frequently quoted by those who use sprinkling instead of immersion. If they would regard its context, they would see how utterly inapplicable it is. It is spoken of the *Jews restored to their own land* at the millennium—“*Say unto the house of Israel . . . . I will*

*burial.* “*Buried with him in baptism :*” Col. ii, 12. *Pouring* water is an act of *ministry* and *mercy*. “Here is Elisha, the son of Shaphat, which *poured water* on the hands of Elijah :” 2 Kings iii, 11 ; John xiii, 5. “I will *pour water* upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground ; I will pour my spirit upon thy seed, and my *blessing* upon thine offspring :” Isa. xl, 3. (4) But baptism represents *wrath*, as displayed in the destroying, unsparing waters of the flood, and *escape through them*. Now an escape supposes danger, and to escape *through the water* supposes a person to be at some time *in a place and depth of water*. The water was God’s appointed element for destroying the old and fleshly, the condemned and unbelieving man. The ark was his appointed means of escape for the new and spiritual man, who is justified by faith. Now, as in the believer both the old and the new man are found, so is the double result of the deluge presented before us. He is immersed beneath the flood, in token of the old man’s being destroyed, (as were the children of the world in Noah’s day ;) but he comes up from the water and escapes through it, because he is of the household of Noah, and has his place in the ark.

Herein we may see the baneful effect of human traditions in obscuring and making void the meaning of God. Where there is no immersion beneath the water the image of the deluge is lost ; and in sprinkling and pouring, a new and false image is substituted, conveying a meaning at variance with the tenor of the Gospel, and representing the flesh as capable of being cleansed, instead of being, by God’s ordinance, directed to be destroyed.

Some plead for sprinkling or pouring, on the ground of convenience. They should first make *death* pleasant and convenient. They should first show that the unsparing, overwhelming *deluge* was pleasant or convenient. Baptism is intended by God to figure the *wrathful, devouring*, billows of the flood : and therefore every step by which take you *from among the Gentiles*, (הַגֵּוֹיִם) and gather you out of all countries, and will bring you *into your own land*. Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you.”

baptism is made to verge towards *ease* and *convenience*, is just so much taken from the meaning of God and his holy ordinance.

In conclusion, therefore, I would say, Do you believe in Christ? If not, flee at once from the wrath to come into the provided ark. Die to the world and to the flesh, that you may live to God.

But, if by God's grace you do already believe, I would add, there is yet a step to be taken. Have you been immersed in the name and into the death of Jesus? If *you have not, this is your duty*. It is not enough for Noah or his children to enter the ark. This is the first and great step. But he must escape through the flood. Faith is our fleeing into the refuge provided—the ark of God. But faith leads on to baptism: as surely as the ark and its inmates must, in order to their escape, pass through the flood. First enter the ark. Then escape through the water; and you are safe. “He that BELIEVETH and is BAPTIZED shall BE SAVED.”

No rite administered to you while an infant, or an unbeliever, is Christian baptism. This the present type proves. Baptism, while an unbeliever, would answer to *the flood's coming on you before you were in the ark*. And this would be *destruction, not salvation*. If, then, you be a child of faith, one of the household of Noah, a disciple of Jesus, escape in God's appointed way—not *from* the water, but *through* it. Until you have passed through the waters, you are living in the Adam world of disobedience, which is under the curse. Flee through the flood, therefore, into the Noah world of blessing and obedience. Be where the ark is. It has left the Adam world and passed through the flood. Do you pass through it likewise, and the blessing of the Lord Jesus be upon your obedient subjection to his word!



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